

Volume 9: Issue 6
February 1 - 14, 2012

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COVER ART

Occupiers erected the "Tent of Dreams" on Monday, Jan. 30.

PHOTO BY ALLEN HOORN

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OUR STORY

Street Sense began in August 2003 after Laura Thompson Osuri and Ted Henson approached the National Coalition for the Homeless on separate occasions with the idea to start a street paper in Washington, D.C.

Through the work of dedicated volunteers, Street Sense published its first issue in November 2003. In 2005, Street Sense achieved 501 (c) 3 status as a nonprofit organization, formed a board of directors and hired a full-time executive director.

Today, Street Sense is published every two weeks through the efforts of four salaried employees, more than 100 active vendors, and dozens of volunteers. Nearly 30,000 copies are in circulation each month.

Your Dollar Makes a Difference

(Street Sense economics)

Each vendor functions as a self-employed subcontractor for Street Sense. That means he or she re-invests in the organization with every purchase. Vendors purchase the paper for 35 cents/issue, which will then be sold to you for a suggested donation of \$1.



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As self-employed contractors, our vendors follow a code of conduct:

1. Street Sense will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations for Street Sense by any other means.
- 2) I will only purchase the paper from Street Sense staff and will not sell papers to other vendors (outside of the office volunteers).
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7. I will not sell Street Sense under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
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10. I understand that Street Sense strives to produce a paper that covers homelessness and poverty issues while providing a source of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Spokesman for the Poor Found Dead

A well-known Alexandria, VA activist who had been missing since September was found dead on Jan. 26.

Acting upon an anonymous tip, Alexandria police found the body of Lenwood "Lenny" Harris, 53, in a well in suburban Maryland.

An autopsy revealed Harris had been shot.

Harris was a spokesman for the underprivileged and the founder of Operation Hope, a nonprofit that provides life skills training and counseling. Helping those in need was a passion for Harris said those who knew him.

Alexandria City Council Member Alicia Hughes told the Washington Post that everyone "recognized him as an integral part of our community who had an unforgettable voice."

Alexandria's Chief of Police told ABC News Channel 7 that he hopes the mystery of Harris' death can be solved. Like many, he knew Harris well."

He fought for issues all the way from government facilities for disadvantaged or minorities," said Chief Earl Cook. "Other times it was simply issues about funding housing."

The police are still working to find suspects and they do have some leads. Not only did a camera capture a man using Harris' credit card shortly af-

ter Harris was missing also the police have found Harris' mobile phone on the Woodrow Wilson bridge.

Man Rewarded for Capture of Suspect in Homeless Killings

For his help in nabbing the suspect in the murders of four Anaheim-area homeless men, Donny Hopkins, a 32-year-old forklift driver, was rewarded \$5,000 by The Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs on January 25, CBS News reported.

On January 13, Hopkins was at a drugstore buying cigarettes for his wife when someone rushed in and alerted shoppers of a murder occurring in a neighboring parking lot. Hopkins ran from the store to find a man repeatedly stabbing a homeless victim outside a Carl's Jr. restaurant. The man attempted to flee, but Hopkins pursued him into a nearby trailer park, dialing 911 on his cell phone as he ran. Police soon arrived at the park and arrested a blood-covered suspect, 23-year-old former Marine, Itzcoatl Ocampo.

Ocampo, whose father is homeless, is suspected of killing four homeless men in the last two months. At Ocampo's apartment, authorities recently found a knife sharpener, a medical marijuana prescription and a book titled *The Most Notorious Crimes in American History*. He is now being held without bail and will be ar-

raigned on Feb. 17. It is unclear whether prosecutors will seek the death penalty.

- Hanna Traverse

India Homeless Shun Shelters

In the Indian capital of New Delhi, many of the roughly 60,000 homeless people of the city are choosing to sleep on the streets and deal with the winter cold instead of staying in a government shelter.

Due to a lack of amenities, bad sanitation and overcrowding in government facilities, the homeless are finding the cold and unsafe streets more preferable, Zee News reported.

"The blankets provided at these shelters are unwashed and smelly," said one homeless person. "We do not know who slept on those bedrolls before us and the blankets are usually full of lice, bedbugs and other ticks."

Homeless families in the city have added incentive to stay on the sidewalk rather than sleeping in a shelter, as the government facilities segregate men and women, meaning husbands, wives and children would have to separate.

The country's Supreme Court has repeatedly issued directives for shelters across India to house the homeless during the winter months.

Even if some homeless want to stay in city shelters, there are only 135 shelters with capacity for about 13,000 people.

Florida Legislators Look to House Homeless in Sports Arenas

When fans are not in the stands and athletes are not playing on the field or court, sports arenas in Florida could start housing the homeless.

Two separate bills are being considered in the Florida legislature that would force any professional sports team in the state that has used public funding to let homeless citizens use its stadium or arena for shelter when games are not being played – or give the taxpayer money back.

A 1988 statute actually already requires teams that take money from the state to provide shelter for the homeless at their arenas, but the law has never been enforced since it was enacted, CBS Miami reported.

"I think they should follow the rule, and the rule was you took the money you were supposed to use it for a program for homeless people and you didn't do it and therefore we want our money back," said state Sen. Mike Bennett, who introduced one of the bills.

Professional teams in Florida have taken over \$270 million from the state.

Meanwhile, homeless advocates in Miami oppose the bill. Ron Book, chairman of the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust, said putting the homeless in stadiums is not an "acceptable method to end homelessness."

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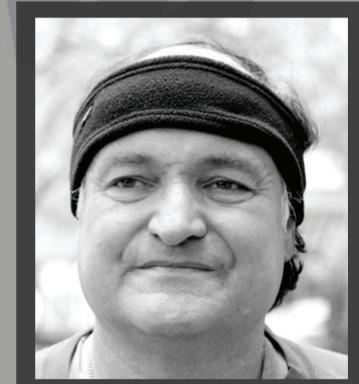
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Douglas Pangburn came to Street Sense after injuries prevented him from finding a job. His favorite part of selling the paper is his repeat customers. He says since coming to Street Sense he has raised his status in the community and is getting to know more people. Each day he looks forward to buying a soda and sandwich and sitting down to relax after a long day of selling the paper.

Counting the Survivors

By Eric Falquero
Managing Editor

12.

That's how many people a group of volunteers were able to find staying outside unsheltered, in an approximately 0.3 square mile section of the District in a single night, Wednesday, Jan. 25.

"I've only been out here for about three or four hours," said Elijah, a middle aged man the group found around 11 p.m., passing time in an alleyway. It was his first night on the streets in six months, though he has been homeless on and off for approximately 20 years.

"Well, I just left a program that I was in, because my time was up." Elijah explained. "I was in the program because I was homeless, plus I was on parole... a lot of things. It's like a reentry program." "Reentry" programs are intended to foster the transition from incarceration back into the community.

This was first time in the local event's 12-year history that the homeless count was being held on a "non-hypothermic" night when weather conditions were not considered threatening to human life, according to Cornell Chappelle, the Deputy Director of Operations for the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP).

TCP conducted the count, powered by over 200 volunteers and professional outreach workers, with the support of related organizations and agencies. The organization, founded in 1989, is a non-profit that coordinates D.C.'s homeless services, everything from street outreach efforts and emergency shelters to transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for individuals and families. The entire spectrum of services is referred to as a continuum of care, a program model put in place in 1994 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help move people out of homelessness.

Volunteer Josh Reiman, a resident of DC for more than two years, said he decided to help out with the count because he wanted to gain deeper insights into the plight of homeless people.

"I've always sympathized, but never

had the chance to understand what their lives are like."

Participants were divided into 24 groups assigned to specific sections of the city, and two roaming groups who moved across territories, in hopes of obtaining the most complete count possible. Similar efforts were mobilized in the city's Maryland and Virginia suburbs and in jurisdictions across the country.

People experiencing homelessness were counted regardless of how they responded to the survey efforts. If a person was unwilling to participate in the survey, volunteers filled out a form including a general description of the person and his location.

One young man just stopped and stared straight ahead when Lissa Ramseaul, a licensed social worker and experienced case manager, with the organization Miriam's Kitchen, asked how he was doing that night.

Then the survey crew came upon a pile of tarps in a doorway, layered and wrapped tightly. At first, no one was sure if there was a person inside the pile. Then a man emerged.

Upon questioning, James, 30, seemed pleased to be counted. .

"It's my pleasure. It's nice to be able to have a conversation with, y'know, people<" he said. "I appreciate it."

"I've been homeless 10 years," he said, "but I just recently started staying outside." James said he left the shelter system because he no longer liked the attitudes of the longtime shelter-users.

"They think it's cool to be in a shelter, so it's hard for me to cope [there]. I'd rather stay out here."

James said he currently spends his days seeking some kind of job.

"It's smarter [than staying in a shelter]," he said. If he finds work, he said he hopes to earn enough to buy a cheap watch with an alarm to help him show up on time. If he needs money to get to the job, he said he will sell his food stamps to get a Smartrip card for the bus. He will continue to sleep outside for awhile, to save money, he said. When asked about his biggest goal, he answered without hesitation.

"Career. Maybe school, then career. Not job, but CAREER."

He said he is really interested in nursing, but said if a nursing career doesn't work out he would be willing to work as a garbage man.

The homeless count must distill the facts from such dialogues into statistics that can be used to map the needs and burdens of the community. Yet the facts behind the statistics remain important.

James said he graduated from high school. Yet his education was disrupted many times.

"In foster care I moved around every six months of my life, so I've never been able to just focus on things like school. I graduated, but I graduated from a charter school - y'know, they don't really give you a good education."

Elijah suffered from substance abuse. Yet he said he has been clean for 13 years. "I can't even look at THAT - I've been over that," he said.

Both men have been homeless for most of their adult lives, since they left

foster care. There are patterns within the patterns found in the statistics.

"This is the essence of putting work behind all of the talk, by measuring what we do and how we do it," HUD Deputy Secretary Estelle Richman said, "We believe we can end homelessness in America."

The full enumeration consists of this unsheltered count, as well as surveys within shelters on the day of, and follow up surveys at breakfast servings and drop-in centers the next day. The full count last year included 11,988 people, up 200 from 2010. This year's numbers will be available in the spring,

James will be included. But he hopes to leave the world of homelessness behind.

"I try to not become homeless, y'know I'm surviving. I call myself surviving instead of homeless, because I do plan on getting out of this situation."



Volunteers, including HUD Deputy Secretary Estelle Richman and Veterans Affairs W. Scott Gould plan their canvassing of the Eastern Market area.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT TURTIL



The night of the count was Elija's first on the street in six months, he has been on and off the streets for the past 20 years, since leaving foster care.

PHOTO BY LAURA LINDSKOV JENSEN



James recently moved outside to stay focused on achieving his goals, away from the shelter environment he experienced.

PHOTO BY LAURA LINDSKOV JENSEN



LEFT: Volunteers were divided into 24 groups, each with an assigned area to canvas.

RIGHT: Group leader Lissa Ramsepaul and Gavin, a volunteer, review their survey results.

PHOTOS BY LAURA LINDSKOV JENSEN

Counting D.C.'s Homeless Population

By Allen Hoorn
Vendor/Volunteer Manager

Top federal officials rallied more than 200 volunteers on the evening of Jan. 25 in the annual effort to count homeless people living on the streets of Washington D.C.

Before heading out from the National City Christian Church for the region's twelfth annual count, V. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and a central figure in the VA's fight against homelessness among America's veterans, greeted the assembled crowd.

"If you don't get it, this is a group effort," he said, stressing the importance of the night's mission. The data gleaned from the annual count informs national and local policies and funding for homeless services, he said.

Estelle Richman, Acting Deputy Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) used her remarks to highlight the plight of all homeless Americans.

"No one should ever be homeless,"

she said. "Everyone deserves a place to live."

Both deputy secretaries marked recent progress in addressing homelessness. They said strategies implemented in recent years to move chronically homeless people into supportive housing programs, appear to be working. Homelessness among veterans dropped more than 12 percent between 2010 and 2011 according to state data compiled into the nation's most recent homeless count, they said. But they were also quick to point out that more must be done to prevent and end homelessness.

Then, donning hats and gloves, the officials and the volunteers headed out. Gould and Richman would spend the next several hours in the Eastern Market area, walking down dark alleys, shining flashlights behind dumpsters, and peeking under bushes, meticulously combing so as not to miss any person who might be sleeping in the elements.

The annual local count is just a small part of a larger effort to take a snapshot of the nation's "homeless picture". In addition to physically walk-

ing the streets to count those who are unsheltered, HUD regulations also call for local jurisdictions to collect data on people using services such as soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

The annual effort, known as a point-in-time (PIT) count, would not end on the night of Jan. 25. On the following morning, additional volunteers visited soup kitchens and drop-in centers to try and gather more information. Emergency shelters were also asked to supply data on their visitors. Such PIT counts are conducted in this so-called blitz fashion to limit duplication of records, which are inevitable according to HUD officials but far less likely if the count is performed quickly than they would be if the count were to take place over the course of days or weeks. In spite of the volunteers' best efforts, organizers agree that the count fails to capture the entire homeless population, even on a given day. Some people do not want to be found.

The data is compiled and analyzed by the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP), the

nonprofit corporation that coordinates the District's homeless services. A final report on this year's count is expected in the spring. The collected information will then be compiled with the data from jurisdictions across the country by HUD for a national snapshot of homelessness in 2012.

The process is lengthy, but while the numbers are crunched, Gould said he plans to stay busy developing a comprehensive strategy to register all veterans prior to their discharge from the military and to identify proven risk factors which may lead to homelessness. He said he hopes his plan will allow the VA to take a more proactive approach to combating homelessness among veterans.

Deputy Secretary Richman, echoing the tone of President Obama's State of the Union Address from the night before the PIT count, said she sees the challenge of ending homelessness as an opportunity for the nation as a whole.

"We can take a big problem and solve it," she said. "If we stick together, we can solve any problem."

Getting a Handle on Veteran Homelessness



A veteran receives information from a worker at the Winterhaven Stand Down. Many tables like this one were set up on the first floor of the Medical Center to provide services and education to the homeless.

PHOTO BY BRANDON COOPER



The room in the basement of the VA Medical Center where veterans could receive free haircuts.

PHOTO BY BRANDON COOPER

By Brandon Cooper
Editorial Intern

Lewis Russell, 55, of Hyattsville, Md., has been unemployed for more than a year and a half.

He came to the 16th annual Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down on Jan. 21 to visit his brother, who stays at the Washington D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and hopefully land a job.

He is one of many veterans in the D.C. area considered at risk of becoming homeless by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"I'm not [homeless] yet," Russell said. "Put it like this though — if it wasn't for my wife, I'd be that way."

As it looks to end veteran homelessness by 2015, the VA is shifting its focus from rescuing the homeless to preventing at-risk veterans like Russell from being on the streets in the first place.

"Our prevention efforts need to supplant our rescue efforts for us to get a handle on [homelessness]," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, who stopped in to visit the annual event, which has traditionally emphasized outreach and service to vets who are already homeless.

More than 70 community and govern-

ment agencies partnered to put on this year's Stand Down, offering a wide range of services, from health screenings to employment opportunities to haircuts. Many services this year aimed to help veterans who have housing to hold onto it. The event drew nearly 400 veterans.

While the District's 2011 point-in-time homeless count identified 515 homeless veterans, a number virtually unchanged from 2010, the number of homeless veterans has decreased by 23 percent since 2008, according to the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness, the nonprofit organization that coordinates the District's homeless services. A majority of them live in shelters or on the streets, with a smaller number participating in transitional housing programs geared to helping address their homelessness. The city currently offers about 150 units of transitional housing to homeless veterans. In addition, more than 200 units of permanent supportive housing are currently available for formerly homeless vets. Nearly a third of homeless veterans struggle with substance abuse, and more than a quarter report mental health issues, according to the Community Partnership.

For some veterans who are current-

ly housed, the economic downturn has hit hard.

Dr. Maria Llorente, the associate chief of staff for mental health for the Medical Center, said at-risk veterans face two major hurdles: unemployment and the mortgage crisis. To help these men and women pay for their homes, the Stand Down increased its focus on these problems.

"One of the new things we've added this year is information on mortgages and helping veterans to maybe look at how to refinance," Llorente said. "If they are employed though, a lot of times that will mitigate the foreclosure issue."

The VA hosted the first Stand Down in 1988 in San Diego. Since then, these events, which can last for as long as three days, occur throughout the country to make essential services readily available for homeless veterans.

New to this year's Stand Down were two free computer training programs and a table for food stamp applications. Officials also used the event as an opportunity to announce the opening of a new community resource and referral center in Northwest Washington. The center, which will be located on 15th Street near Rhode Island Avenue, is scheduled to open this spring.

The referral center is meant to be like a year-round Stand Down, a place where homeless and at-risk veterans can find services of all kinds. Dr. Fuad Issa, the medical director of the referral center, hopes veterans come to the center "before they reach rock bottom."

For those veterans who were already homeless, outreach workers were on hand, encouraging them to take advantage of a variety of health screenings. Those who took the tests, including temperature and blood pressure screenings, were allowed to participate in a large clothing giveaway.

"We offer those screenings here because so many of the folks who are homeless are so much more concerned with food and clothes, which I can understand, but this gives us a chance to show that there is also help from the medical side," said Kenneth Barnum, a social worker with the Medical Center.

More than anything though, the Winterhaven Stand Down shed light on a problem that goes well beyond the event.

"This is one day of the year," Shinseki said. "Homelessness is a 365-days-a-year issue. How do we convert this to 365 days so veterans aren't waiting for this one day?"

HOLDING OUT

for spring

By Anna Salinas
Editorial Intern

Life is not easy for the protesters camped in McPherson Square. The cold January weather has caused the site's number to dwindle. Donations of food, supplies, and money have all shrunken considerably. The makeshift tea and coffee shop has been abandoned.

Nerves have been strained at times. The latest challenge came in the form of a standoff with police over a two-and-a-half story blue "Tent of Dreams" the protesters pitched over the statue of Major General James B. McPherson in the center of the park. At the time Street Sense went to press, US Park police had given the protesters notice that the tent needed to be removed. But protesters said they planned to remain in the park.

It was just the latest of many struggles faced in the four months since the first of the Occupiers staked their claim on the square, renamed it Liberty Plaza, and made a public statement of their discontent with the direction of the nation and the world.

It seems like a long time ago now, when a handful of people—some of them college students—sat on the autumn grass discussing strategies for expanding the protest. A large pile of cardboard protest signs lay nearby, ready to be raised. The goals were wide ranging. "Generally unsatisfied," read one. "We will take back America from the legal financial mob," read another. "'Devolvemos Nuestra Voz!' 'We are Here Until it Works."

Meanwhile Occupy Wall Street had only just begun garnering serious attention from mainstream media outlets. And unlike Zuccotti Park, Liberty Plaza was not yet officially an encampment. As one organizer explained, at that point there were still too few protesters to resist the police and establish an overnight presence. So instead, a dedicated few slept on the sidewalk and under store awnings surrounding the park.

But by mid-November, the situation

had changed. In just a few weeks, the park had become packed with tents—even one teepee. The protesters' daily demonstrations—called "actions"—had grown in ambition. On Nov. 17, about 100 protesters formed a human chain across the Francis Scott Key Bridge, leaving traffic funneling slowly on each side. No arrests or injuries were reported, and for a time, it seemed that relations between police and occupiers would remain fairly positive.

Then, on Dec. 7—the same week that protesters in New York were evicted from Zuccotti Park—hundreds gathered on K St., NW to protest corruption within the lobbying industry, resulting in a tense standoff with police. More than 70 people were arrested.

Early in January, the protesters rallied in front of the Capitol, chanting phrases like "Congress sold us out." Four protesters were arrested, and several who took part in the rally claimed that they observed unprovoked violent police force.

"Police were actually hitting people," said one protestor, who identified himself as Harmony.

Now, as the McPherson encampment reaches its five-month mark, some protesters face civil citations.

Worries about hunger and security have made life harder. Conflicts have broken out. Energy seems to be flagging. "During the day, there's not much food," said Melissa Miller, who has been sleeping at the encampment for just under two months.

According to Miller, who also camped in Zuccotti Park until it was raided, sleeping bags and winter gear are also difficult to find on-site. Despite the slump in supply donations, however, Miller added that coffee shops and restaurants continue to donate food each evening.

Among the many challenges facing protestors in Liberty Plaza is security, though a small "de-escalation" group is charged with mediating conflicts among occupiers and (often intoxicated) passers-by. Petty theft also continues to

Feb. 1 marks the fourth month of Occupy DC, but with encampments in other cities closing, what does the future hold for Liberty Plaza?



PHOTO BY BRETT MOHAR

trouble the encampment.

"Every committee was issued an iTouch," said Mike, who declined to reveal his last name, "but now they're all gone." Mike traveled down to Occupy DC after Occupy Baltimore was raided in December.

The mood in McPherson Square, say protestors, has also changed. Actions are no longer daily and media coverage has fallen.

"There isn't enough of a sense of urgency," said a man who identified himself as Scout. "We need to be having an action every single day."

But protestors have not given up hope. Petty cash donations range between \$60-\$140 each day, according to Mike.

Late in January, the U.S. Park Service announced that citations would be issued to all those violating park's the no-camping ban. In response, many protestors swiftly removed their sleeping bags from the encampment, leaving behind a handful of empty tents. The kitchen tent was also hollowed out, though the library tent remained.

But few of the protestors said they fear that police will force the encampment to shut down.

"There's a really strong legal precedent allowing people to camp out here in DC," said Camillo Brokaw who before Occupy DC spent several months in Occupy Albuquerque, which has since been raided.

Brokaw added that he and other protestors are prepared to remain onsite, even if police do step up enforcement.

"I think a large percentage of people are going to hold their ground," he said.

According to Brokaw, the protestors are determined to maintain a presence in McPherson Square until the spring, when they believe participation will return to its earlier level, if not increase.

Until then, the protestors will continue to hold regular committee meetings and to engage any passers-by who may be interested in their cause.

"I don't think I've been here a day without talking to someone outside the protest," said Brokaw.

"Top Ten Reasons to be an Occupier", With apologies to David Letterman - continued from page 7

8) \$2000 penalties, fees, and fines on my UAL-Chase Bank Platinum VISA card 7) Amazing hand signals 6) Mom and Dad won't let me camp out by myself



PHOTO BY ANNA SALINAS

Finding Dwight An Occupation Journal

By Toni R. Radmann
Volunteer

For 22 hours straight we rode from Minnesota to D.C., hoping that if enough members of the 99 percent came, we could have an impact on our nation's capital.

It was 55 degrees and sunny on Tuesday, Jan. 10. Our spirits were high. We joined other tourists at the MLK and FDR memorials. We watched the sunset over the Tidal Basin from the bridge, then ate dinner in Chinatown.

When we arrived at Freedom Plaza the park was lined with multicolored tents and filled with concerned citizens. We were there for a rally against the abuses of Guantanamo Bay, and came bearing 171 orange jumpsuits and black hoods, provided to us by Amnesty International to order represent the detainees.

While my group left, I stayed to instead stay at the encampment and join the Occupation movement myself.

It was too rainy and dark to set up tents but we were invited to join one of the original tents that was set up at the start of the Occupation on Oct. 1. It sat on palettes and was large enough to fit eight people. Once again, I was one of the lucky ones to get a mattress, sandwiched between two warm bodies.

A hot meal of chicken, mashed potatoes and vegetable salad was the first time I had eaten all day. I devoured it like a starving dog. The next day, there was no breakfast because of the endless bickering in the kitchen of the tent.

For days, the bickering continued and

a closed, angry mood floated through the camp. I offered to help with the dishes, but waited for an hour with no response. So instead, I moved to a nearby McDonald's where I was told a meeting was being held.

As I ate my burger, organizers explained that there were basement sleeping quarters at St. Stephen's Church. I left for the church with the group, but when I arrived, I was told the accommodations were no longer available. Instead, I would have to take a cab back to Freedom Plaza. The taxi driver was willing to accept my last \$11. I was offered a collapsed tent for the night.

The next day, we marched from the White House to the Supreme Court single file, in silence, with our hands clasped behind our backs. I could barely see through my black hood, and it was difficult to breathe, but I knew it was nothing compared to waterboarding, and from this, I drew strength.

As I progressed forward to the front, I watched the faces of those watching us. They were curious and some showed us their support, but most had empty stares, spooky like a crowd of zombies from a horror movie.

Again I could not sleep. Frustrated, I reluctantly left the security of the group to take a walk. The first person I met gave me a bright smile and asked if I would join him for a meal. He called me "pretty lady," and although I knew he probably said that to all women, I appreciated the compliment.

He attractive and young enough to be my son. "Charles," he, introducing himself. For some reason, I began to feel safe talking to Charles as we walked in circles around the block. He wasn't ashamed to admit that he was recently released from 2 1/2 years in prison and had lived in the streets before and after that. I was impressed.

I laughed as he told stories about his life. Suddenly he pointed to bundle on the ground. I looked. It was a person. A dead person. Charles refused to believe me. He shook the bundle, then suddenly realizing the truth, grew horrified. I called 911.

I began to cry uncontrollably. I was shocked and devastated. Charles began to comfort me, actually managing to calm me down. That was something only my deceased husband, Joe, was able to do, I realized. And his gentle eyes looked just like Joe's, full of concern and compassion. I sank into his arms until my sobs finally stopped. I asked him to stay with me. I didn't want to be alone.

We continued to walk all through the night, and I felt myself learning every-

thing about him.

He was attractive and young enough to be my son.

In the morning, when I saw Charles, the light gently illuminated his face. I could not resist kissing him. His lips were charged with intensity. I found myself feeling things that I thought were long-dead.

Soon afterward, we went to a nearby McDonald's for coffee. We sat at a table with two of Charles's friends, David and Solomon. David was obviously mentally ill and Solomon was quiet, answering my questions with short, profound remarks. Charles looked even more handsome in the bright fluorescent lights.

I pulled a small Etch-a-Sketch from my purse and wrote "Charles." He tried to return the gesture. Meanwhile, Solomon watched with envy. I handed the Etch-a-Sketch to him. He suddenly stopped rambling and began to draw. He drew a perfect maze and smiled as if it were a masterpiece. I was so moved that I gave him the Etch-a-

Sketch. He lit up.

Charles took me by the hand and showed me D.C. through his eyes. Together we held a funeral for the dead man. I was told later that the man was named Dwight Brown, though the detective did not know anything about who he was.

After a few nights at a hotel, I returned to the camp. As darkness fell, I begged Charles to stay in my tent, but instead he slipped out through the flap. It was going to be another long night in D.C.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A sample of what goes on in Liberty Plaza this month

WEDNESDAY Feb. 1

6:00 p.m. General Assembly

8:00 p.m. People of Color Working Group meeting

8:00 p.m. Committee meetings

FRIDAY Feb. 4

2:00 p.m. Women's Caucus meeting

4:00 p.m. White ally caucus and discussion

4:00 p.m. People of Color Working Group meeting

4:00 p.m. Action Committee

6:00 p.m. General Assembly

8:00 p.m. Committee meetings

SATURDAY Feb. 5

2:00 p.m. Housing Working Group meeting

2:00 p.m. Action Media Info Committee meeting

3:00 p.m. Media Committee meeting

4:00 p.m. Research and Process Development Working Group meeting

4:00 p.m. Criminal (In)Justice Working Group meeting

6:00 p.m. General Assembly

8:00 p.m. Committee Meetings

COURTESY OF OCCUPYDC.ORG

Homeless with a cause

Homeless advocate Bob Ballard explains what being homeless and the Occupy movement have in common

By Bob Ballard

Volunteer

I have been a more or less full-time occupant of Freedom Plaza since Occupy D.C. started on Oct. 6, 2011. I drove my old RV from California to participate in the occupation because I believe that it is a global movement that will change the world. I lived in my RV for two years, and when I am not in a tent on Freedom Plaza, that is my home.

The aspect of the occupation that most interests me is the social structure and how we created a community from scratch on the plaza. Before occupiers showed up, there was already a community there: homeless folks. Some had been there for years. An interesting thing happened when the occupation arrived. The homeless folks were confronted with something they mostly didn't want and didn't understand. At times, some of them were quite upset about it, and understandably so. After all, they were there first, weren't they?

As time passed, some homeless people decided to join our occupation community and agreed to follow the principles we set for the well-being of everyone. Those who joined transformed their lives in many ways. First, they had people who cared about them as we did for everyone in the community.

Second, the opportunity to perform important tasks that kept the camp running inspired them; soon many were working extra hard at everything from food preparation to security patrol. Third, the homeless began to see themselves as valuable members of the community and they realized others saw them in this light as well. This is the point I would like to focus on.

I asked myself, why did taking on work assignments help people see themselves in a more positive way? Even more basically, why did the homeless even decide to join our community

when they could eat and sleep at local shelters? I think the answer to both of these questions is one word: contribution. A chance to contribute to others is what makes all the difference. Contributing time, talent and labor to something you believe in is very empowering. It makes people feel they matter.

Based on my work with homeless people over the last five years and my experience at the occupation, I believe that what our society needs are opportunities for people to contribute to something in which they believe. Sure, there are plenty of places where people can volunteer, and that works for many people. However, when you are down

The Occupy movement has become [an] opportunity for many homeless folks.

on your luck and have nothing left to believe in, it is sometimes hard to find something that inspires you.

This is why I believe we need to work on creating opportunities for contribution that really involve people, that inspire them to be part of something bigger than themselves. The Occupy Movement has become that opportunity for many homeless folks here in D.C. and across the nation.

The Occupy movement created these opportunities through the formation of a community. Because these communities were formed in public parks, we chose to live on the ground much like the homeless people who were there before us. Thus, the movement adopted some aspects of a homeless lifestyle. What is the difference between sleep-

ing in a park as a homeless person and sleeping there as part of the Occupy movement? In a word: context.

The people participating in the movement chose to sleep in the park based on a commitment to address some social, environmental and/or economic injustice. The Occupiers used the act of sleeping in the park to make a statement, forward an agenda and call attention to their cause. Conversely, the homeless people living in the parks did not have other good choices or a purpose in being there except to sleep or rest. Thus the same experience, sleeping outside in a park, had a powerful purpose and context for the Occupiers that did not exist for the homeless.

Circumstances derive their meaning through the context in which we place them. Thus, identical circumstances can have vastly different meanings depending on the context in which we see them. The Occupiers saw sleeping in the park as a powerful statement of their beliefs. The homeless viewed the same circumstance as survival. Both interpretations are valid, and nothing is wrong with any interpretation that one wishes to attach to a circumstance.

However, some interpretations are empowering while others are not. It

is easy to feel like a victim of circumstance, but that is just one interpretation. For example, a heavy rain during a parade could be considered a disaster by the organizer, while a farmer a few miles away suffering drought would be overjoyed. The rain is the same, but the contexts differ.

Many times, we cannot quickly change the circumstances of our reality, but we can easily change our interpretation of those circumstances by choosing powerful context. Since each of us creates the context we use to interpret our circumstances, all of us can interpret our experiences in a way that empowers us and makes our lives a little bit easier and lot more enjoyable.

Bob Ballard is the founder and executive director of the Hearts Of Fire Project (www.HeartsOfFireProject.org), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization committed to empowering homeless people. He is also an award-winning singer/songwriter and composer (www.BobBallardMusic.com). Bob lives in his 1991 Winnebago and travels around the country making public appearances, writing, leading workshops and performing music.

Contact email: heartsoffire@ureach.com or bob@bobballardmusic.com



PHOTO BY ANNA SALINAS

Comics & Games

BARNEY & CLYDE IS A COMIC STRIP ABOUT AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN A HOMELESS MAN AND A TYCOON. IT'S ABOUT OUR MODERN, POLARIZED ECONOMY OF HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS. IT RE-EXAMINES TRADITIONAL MEASURES OF SUCCESS, FAILURE, AND THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS.

BARNEY

by Weingartens & Clark

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS: GENE WEINGARTEN IS A COLLEGE DROPOUT AND THE NATIONALLY SYNDICATED HUMOR COLUMNIST FOR THE WASHINGTON POST. DAN WEINGARTEN IS A FORMER COLLEGE DROPOUT AND A CURRENT COLLEGE STUDENT MAJORING IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. MANY THANKS TO GENE WEINGARTEN AND THE WASHINGTON POST WRITER'S GROUP FOR ALLOWING STREET SENSE TO RUN BARNEY & CLYDE.

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SOLUTION

SHAW ON SPORTS: NATS TOWN IN TIME

By Chris Shaw
Vendor

HOW DO YOU BUILD A BALLCLUB?

*Twas the night before Spring Training,
And all through Viera,
Folk wondered and mused
Are the Powers confused?
Or will Bryce Harper and
Strasburg be duly amused
At the sight of all these multi-multi-tiered
Prospects, former Marlins, Cubs, perhaps
Even an Oriole or a Jay. Gee!
The whole menagerie!
Can they field, is their pitch
An ace every time, or more in keeping with
Slime, can't you see?
Are these prospects truly
"Werth" it, or will Nats Town merely be
Rocked by another Phillies' IED?*

An Unholy Alliance

By Jeffrey McNeil

Vendor



The saying goes, "You cannot serve God and mammon." However, the Republican Party has tried for decades to fuse the

two. This alliance of capitalists, neo-cons and Christian evangelicals make strange bedfellows, but they have common agendas: creating unregulated free markets, spreading democracy around the globe, limiting the role of government, and restoring Christianity. This years Republican primary is a case history of the struggle to hold these interests together.

Ronald Reagan began this strategy by speaking about a "morning in America", spinning stories about welfare queens in Cadillacs and mourning the breakdown of the family. This would change, he promised, if you gave up your union membership, went to church and turned to capitalism.

Preaching this good news throughout the Deep South and the Rust Belt, with the aid of neo-cons and Wall Street, Reagan built a doctrine of Jesus and capitalism that manipulated evangelicals and white blue-collar workers into becoming Reagan Democrats.

Once in office, he crushed air traffic controllers for wanting better working conditions and his economic policies ushered in an era of corporate greed. Republicans still spin the myth of the Reagan legacy. On Election Day, working class citizens still wave the American flag willfully voting their jobs away and praying that Jesus will provide.

The Republican Party splintered after Reagan left office. While George H.W. Bush tried his best to keep the unholy alliance alive, his decision to raise taxes on the wealthy infuriated the party. The cultural conservatives joined Pat Robertson. Blue-collar workers sided with Pat Buchanan, and Wall Street supported Ross Perot. This friction helped elect

Bill Clinton.

Clinton's terms further fractured the unholy alliance. Despite an economic boom, a budget surplus and the record number of Americans at work, the Republicans kept trying to get rid of Clinton. While numerous scandals and an impeachment were unable to get him out of office, Clinton's lifestyle did reunite the pro-business wing and cultural conservatives as they pursued the White House in 2000.

George W. Bush's message of compassionate conservatism resonated with all parts of the Axis of Evil. Preaching Jesus while executing people in Texas, he helped his friends by deregulating the market and destroying the EPA. W.'s actions not only united his base it united the rest of America--by pissing it off. While Americans wanted revenge for 9/11, his administration was secretly dismantling civil liberties.

The anti-war sentiment of the American people along with the financial crisis of 2008 again fragmented the Republican Party leading to the election of President Obama. While many Americans were jubilant, Republicans were again united by the common purpose of obstructing the administration. Donald Trump raised fears that he would redistribute wealth by letting tax cuts expire, right-wing commentators like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck tapped into racial fears by calling him a Muslim.

With a message of Jesus and job creation, in 2010, this unholy alliance of businessman and Evangelicals took control of the House of Representatives in a rout. Right-wingers claimed the end of the Democratic Party was imminent as the Tea Party, evangelicals, greedy capitalists and the rest of the Republican tent rallied around the flagpole.

As we move into the 2012 election, we will see if the unholy alliance of evangelicals and greedy capitalists will be able to overtake the White House again or if their tenuous relationship will disintegrate splitting the party and sealing reelection for President Obama.

People for Fairness Coalition

By Eugene Sanford

Volunteer

Nearly four years ago, the People for Fairness Coalition got its start.

The group was founded by a few homeless individuals concerned about heat and hot water problems at one city shelter and the closing of another. They were frustrated by a feeling that they lacked a voice at the city's Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) meetings.

During the summer of 2008, they joined together, selected a name, wrote a mission statement and set goals for campaigning to protect the housing rights of impoverished people.

And ever since PFFC has worked to promote an ongoing dialogue and discussion on the issues involving homelessness, housing, jobs, job training, low-income affordable housing, outreach, advocacy and peer mentoring.

A major mission for the group is to serve as an effective voice for the poor and homeless in city government. Members of PFFC have testified at hearings of the City Council Committee on Human Services, effectively speaking out against budget cuts that would impact homeless services. They have joined Save Our Safety Net rallies and marched on the Wilson Building. Very recently, PFFC members joined more than 250 people to attend the Housing for All rally at the Martin Luther King Library, where this writer read his poem titled "What HOME Means to Me." He was presented with a first place prize for his work.

PFFC members also regularly attend and participate in meetings of larger groups and organizations including the ICH, the Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations and the Fair Budget Coalition.

Group members are also involved

in the community. At the Occupy D.C. Protest Encampment, members of PFFC have lent assistance in serving meals and establishing connections with those involved. PFFC members have also joined with staffers at Miriam's Kitchen to engage in a voter registration campaign, encouraging homeless people to fill out a voter registration card and vote for the candidate they feel could best help them to make the transition from the streets to stability. A total of 24 people have been registered, including eight from the recent voter registration campaign at the New York Avenue Shelter.

PFFC members have even expanded their spirit of empowerment by beginning additional groups. Members John McDermott and Paul Lee Taylor are now facilitating an advocacy group with the clients of Thrive D.C. in the Columbia Heights area. PFFC Director Robert Warren, and Eric Sheptock organize meetings for Shelter, Housing and Respectful Change (SHARC), an organization they founded at the Community for Creative Non-Violence shelter.

Director Robert Warren, together with Yolanda Bynum, John McDermott, Junior Almazard, O.B. Black, Eugene Sanford, Paul Lee Taylor, Richard Embden, Anthony Davis, Carlton Harris, Todd Wiggins, and other volunteers run our advocacy meetings and discussion formats at Miriam's Kitchen, located at 2401 Virginia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Meetings are held every Tuesday morning from 8:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend.

You can look up PFFC on Facebook, Yahoo, LinkedIn, and Blogger.

Members of PFFC have grown as individuals since 2008 and we continue to grow.

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What We Go Through

by Jennifer C. Thomas

Vendor

I hold myself to sleep at night
And let the bed bugs get a nibble and a bite
For comfort is what it is at its moment
With a sheet too thin to solace one with warmth embracement
And wake to a morning of wake-up calls
Prepare oneself with refreshment in the refreshment room
But what of the refreshing in an half-sanitary room to groom
Move on to clothe oneself with clothing of sheet residue
Lint brush of relief saves the clothes from lint bunch
Clothes at rescue
Head strong move on
Packed bag leaves one to carry baggage
Out the door, where the sun says, "Hi"
And a day's worth of encouragement sometimes say goodbye
But what's left of courage gets one through the day
And deep inside something says, "You're OK."
Schedules and deadlines the usual
Time ticks away as it waits for success to catch up
But how does the relationship with time and success
Help one to be at one's best
To ever be a perfect match.
For the hustle to have success is a struggle
And the wandering is tiring.
I can't wait to get some rest
Is one fully at peace, is one fully at happiness

from the bottom to the top.
How to get there going through so many tests
Moving to get to another level
But situation after situation can be formed to attack with stress
What we go through.
Is a life filled with toilet paper and mess?
Wipe away the excess and make sure to use the air freshener to refresh
For to find a decent breeze of pleasantness
And one finds solace in music to take away the distress
Becoming as one with the music, the message, and the artist
Taking in time moments at the library within a personal concert, fulfillment
has started.
Metaphorically express what we feel and go through
Some have it worse
And some have it better
And for at the end of the day
I hold myself to sleep at night
And let the bed bugs get a nibble and bite
For comfort is what it is at its moment
I thank God I'm able to walk in and out from a roof over my head.
Food is in reach
So are other necessities.
But this is a part of us
This is just partial of "What We Go Through"
Being homeless.

Valentine's Day

By Evelyn Nnam

Vendor



I love Valentine's Day. It is not just a holiday; it is everyone's favorite day. It is a day you can share and express your love for one another. Flowers, cards and gifts are great treats for all of your loved ones!

I love Valentine's Day because you always feel loved and special. You always have friends to give and share with you their hearts and their appreciation.

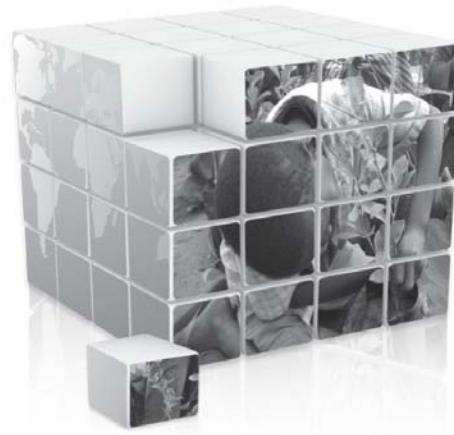
It's a day when you can be very creative and make things for your mom, your dad and your friends. You can sing, dance and play in a loving way to show how much you love that special person you have been waiting for. Poems, songs, movies, skits, speeches and essays are all ways you can show and express your love, thanks and appreciation. It is a day you can share a hug or a kiss or both.

You always have to give your heart to show someone your love and your appreciation. This is what Valentine's Day means to loved ones.

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ALARM BELLS AGAIN, JUST LIKE 1932

Chris Shaw
Vendor

As of Friday the 13th, we heard of a rat alert. Uncleanliness and havoc in the camps.

Wasn't that the war cry in 1932? Eighty years gone, the Bonus Marchers, routed from their improvised "Hoover-villes." Can't park your carcass on Federal land, it was said.

In rode the White Knight, General Douglas MacArthur, with a troop of cavalry.

MacArthur's adjutant Dwight D. Eisenhower, was close at hand. Pistol cocked and ready.

Yet Ike never fired his weapon, it was reported at the time.

Tanks and 'dozers rode over the tar paper shacks. Fire and choking pitchy smoke filled the air.

There was an alternate site then, too, as now. Folks with 'ideas' and crude printing presses squatted in crumbling Victorian theatres and rooming houses, condemned for the gleaming

Greco-Roman 'Triangle' soon to come. Is our own era kinder and gentler. For "sanitary reasons, Mayor Gray proposes to move the McPherson 'movement' over to the more manageable Freedom



Plaza, where there might be 'air to spare' between the tiers of yurts and tents where calmer heads philosophize aloud.

When the hungry, angry Bonus Army was dispersed by the U.S. Army in '32, it was shades of our contemporary Katrina hegira, as moms and children were bussed and auto-ed out west to places not their homes, and untold platoons of their men were shipped off in open slat freight cars further still. This forced exodus helped fuel the massive unfocused streaming of "Hoboes" across the vastness of America, as portrayed graphically in William Wellman's wrenching opus "Wild Boys of the Road(1934)".

The marchers weren't paid their due from the First World War until after the Second World War.

How long from their dispersal will today's "Occupiers" receive their just satisfaction?

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Mercy's Light

By Tammy L. Kruza
Vendor

Clarissa Harlow Barton
Do you know her name?
She was a Christmas gift from God
To ease man's suffering and pain.

Born in Massachusetts,
In 1821,
She was just seventeen
When she began to educate the young.

She opened a free school
In New Jersey, where,
Instead of leaving her in charge
They put a man in there.

So she got herself a job
With the U.S. Government
Working in the office
Of copyrights and patents.

"Angel of the Battlefield"
Is what they called her when
She nursed wounded soldiers
In the Civil War, and then,

Searched for the missing,
When the war was through.
She also marched for suffrage,
To give women their equal due.

Old Clara fell ill
Somewhere along the way.
Her doctor told her to rest,
To take a holiday.

But even when in Europe
She found someone in need - yeah-
And learned of the Red Cross
As outlined by Geneva.

Twelve countries signed that treaty,
But not Uncle Sam
Until Clarissa got involved
And drew up a new plan.

From just helping in war zones
To any catastrophe,
So the next time the news
Shows disaster on TV

And you see the Red Cross there
You'll know it was done
By a woman who's place
Was supposed to be in the home.

Yes! She was a powerhouse.
And just one final note:
She died eight years
Before women had the right to vote.

Street Sense, Part I

By Michael Pennycook
Vendor

Never really thought I would be homeless! Never thought I would be writing something for a homeless newspaper. Strange, there comes a time when everyone's homeless story becomes ONE. I guess this is mine. Don't really matter where it starts, the important thing is where you end up. The journey, as much as people tell you, is not fun at all. The end is important, but just another beginning. The story I am about to tell is certainly a unique one. Friends, family, love, homelessness. My need and desire is to inform as many people as I can. This story needs to be heard and understood quickly. It's not a "story of the outside," from the "other side," or the "right side." Don't know what story to start with, but God willing, the Street Sense will come out of me.

Valentine's Day

By Sybil Taylor
Vendor

A day of love
A day of happiness
A day of caring and sharing
A day of romance
A day of understanding
A day for kissing and hugging
A day for old lovers-old flames
A day for new lovers-new flames
A day to give a card and a bag of candy to the one you love.
A day to show the one you love just how you feel about him or her.
A day to show your heart of appreciation:
Valentine's Day.

Our Page

Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor,

I am a regular reader of Street Sense and found this week's front-page article interesting, if incomplete. The article, "Higher Rents for Poorest Tenants?" criticizes bill language in the Affordable Housing and Self-Sufficiency Act that proposes raising the minimum rent for households in public and assisted housing. The current minimum rent of \$50 has not been raised in 14 years. A lot has changed in that time including the current federal budget crisis that has caused severe under funding of public housing. The Obama Administration and Congress have actually taken away \$3 billion from the public housing budget since 2010. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently measured the deferred capital backlog of public housing at \$25.6 billion. The stark reality is that public housing, without adequate operating and capital funding, will soon need to board up units thereby shrinking the supply of deeply affordable housing.

Public housing is community-owned and accountable to its boards of commissioners, resident councils and mayors. In the local/federal contract, housing authorities provide the physical properties and professional housing managers in return for the federal government's commitment to fund the difference between what low-income tenants can pay and what it actually costs to operate the housing. The federal government has essentially abrogated that "contract" sending housing agencies scrambling to find additional funds. The minimum rent increase is just one way to generate additional funds. Your article should have mentioned that the minimum rent provision comes with a hardship exemption so that the neediest households are protected if they cannot afford to pay.

More hard choices are ahead for public housing. Rather than merely complain to the House Financial Services Subcommittee Chair Biggert about one small and necessary measure, interested parties should work with her to find new and creative ways to generate adequate funding at housing authorities so that this very limited supply of affordable housing can be maintained.

Kathi Whalen
Housing Policy Analyst
Public Housing Authorities Directors Association

Street Sense welcomes feedback and comments from our readers. If you agree with something we have written, think we have made an error, or would like to comment on one of the stories you read in Street Sense, feel free to let us know.

Address your comments to the editor and send them to the following address:

Street Sense
1317 G Street NW
Washington D.C. 20005

You may also send your comments via email to editors@streetsense.org

God's People Are Tested



Know your HIV status

An Open Pastoral Letter to the Residents of Washington, DC from Your Lutheran Neighbors:

Washington, DC is facing a crisis. According to a recent report from the District of Columbia government, over 3% of DC residents age 12 or older are living with HIV or AIDS, an epidemic that rivals infection rates in countries considered to be severely affected by this disease.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects us all. Rather than acknowledging that impact, too often churches have shied away from confronting HIV/AIDS - despite the fact that many of our members and their loved ones are HIV positive or are living with AIDS.

Today, we declare our commitment to tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS and to educate our congregations on the importance of HIV testing.

We believe that in our churches - as pastors, lay leaders, and members - we are called by Jesus Christ to care for each other and for all in our community affected and infected by HIV. To that end, we commit to:

- Extend our love, support, and compassion to all, especially those living with HIV/AIDS;
- Eliminate the stigma associated with those who are living with HIV/AIDS;
- Generate open dialogue in our congregations in order to make our churches safe places to talk about HIV/AIDS;
- Challenge our members to examine any fears or misperceptions of HIV/AIDS that we harbor; and to
- Encourage our members to be tested for HIV.

Care for those who are sick and suffering is close to the heart of God. By making these commitments we are witnessing to God's love and standing with the whole Church to help overcome the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our community.

In Christ's Love,

The Rev. Richard H. Graham, Bishop

The Rev. Renata Eustis

The Rev. Wendy Moen

The Rev. Cathy Feil

The Rev. Tom Omholt

Bradley J. H. Thom, CDR, CHC, USN

Chaplain (Colonel) F. Eric Wester

The Rev. Susanne Blume

The Rev. Tom Knoll

The Rev. Conrad Braaten

The Rev. LeeAnn Schray

The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch, Director for Evangelical Mission, Metropolitan Washington DC Synod ELCA

The Rev. Amy Sevimli, Assistant to the Bishop, Metropolitan Washington DC Synod ELCA

Deacon Katherine Miller-Holland, Lutheran Social Services of the National Capitol Area

Georgetown Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.

Christ Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.

Community of Christ Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, VA

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fairfax, VA

The Rev. Michael D. Wilker

The Rev. Theresa Hannon

The Rev. Paul Opsahl

The Rev. Susan Gaeta

The Rev. Kathy Hlatshwayo

The Rev. Karen Brau

The Rev. Meredith Lovell Keseley

The Rev. Jeffrey Wilson

The Rev. Gerald Johnson

The Rev. John Kidd

The Rev. Phillip Gaines

The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch, Director for Evangelical Mission, Metropolitan



Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

By Anna Salinas
Editorial Intern

Home to more than 40 women, residents of N Street Village in Northwest D.C. cheerfully greet guests to the shelter despite the dreariness of the winter around them.

Offering temporary, transitional and affordable housing options to about 900 women each year, the organization serves roughly 60% of the District's adult homeless female population, according to their website.

Established in 1972 by a group of local churchgoers, the days at N Street are busy. Between meals the women hurry to classes and group activities, many focused on rehabilitation and job readiness.

While the organization estimates that 86 percent of the women who enter N Street suffer from a mental illness, addiction, or both, many will maintain their sobriety, provided they set a recovery goal. Moreover, nearly

all residents who are newly employed go on to keep their jobs for three months or more.

Included in the shelter's programs is a Group Home option for women with a history of mental illness who are interested in living long-term in a supportive environment. In addition, the Luther Place Night Shelter offers free, temporary shelter for women provided they participate in weekly meetings, activities and chores. N Street Village added to these programs in November by merging with Miriam's House, a residential community for women living with HIV and AIDS.

"This is a strategic move that will preserve and increase housing and services for homeless women living with HIV/AIDS in our region," said Schroeder Stribling, Executive Director of N Street Village, in a press release.

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS HOTLINE

1-888-7WE HELP (1-888-793-4357)

SHELTER

Calvary Women's Services
110 Maryland Avenue, NE
(202) 289-0596 (office)
(202) 289-2111 (shelter)
www.calvaryservices.org

Central Union Mission (Men)
1350 R Street, NW
(202) 745-7118, www.missiondc.org

Open Door Shelter (Women)
425 2nd Street, NW
(202) 393-1909
www.newhopeministriesdc.org/id3.html

Community of Hope (Family)
1413 Girard Street, NW
(202) 232-7356, www.communityofhopedc.org

Covenant House Washington (Youth)
2001 Mississippi Avenue, SE
(202) 610-9600, www.covenanthousedc.org

John Young Center (Women)
119 D Street, NW
(202) 639-8469, www.catholiccharitiesdc.org

My Sister's Place
PO Box 29596, Washington, DC 20017
(202) 529-5261 (office)
(202) 529-5991 (24-hour hotline)

N Street Village (Women)
1333 N Street, NW
(202) 939-2060, www.nstreetvillage.org

Samaritan Inns
2523 14th St., NW
(202) 667 - 8831
<http://www.samaritaninns.org/home/>

New York Ave Shelter (Men 18+)
1355-57 New York Avenue, NE
(202) 832-2359

FOOD

Charlie's Place
1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW
(202) 232-3066
www.stmargaretsdc.org/charliesplace

Church of the Pilgrims (Sundays only)
2201 P Street, NW
(202) 387-6612, www.churchofthepilgrims.org

Thrive DC
Breakfast served Mon.-Fri., 9:30-11 a.m.
Dinner for women and children, Mon.-Fri.,
3-6 p.m.

St. Stephens Parish Church
1525 Newton St, NW
(202) 737-9311, www.thrivedc.org

Food and Friends
219 Riggs Road, NE
(202) 269-2277, www.foodandfriends.org

Miriam's Kitchen
2401 Virginia Avenue, NW
(202) 452-8089, www.miriamskitchen.org

The Welcome Table
Church of the Epiphany
1317 G Street, NW
(202) 347-2635, <http://www.epiphanydc.org/ministry/welcometbl.htm>

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Christ House
1717 Columbia Road, NW
(202) 328-1100, www.christhouse.org

Unity Health Care, Inc.
3020 14th Street, NW
(202) 745-4300, www.unityhealthcare.org

Whitman-Walker Clinic
1407 S Street, NW
(202) 797-3500, www.wwc.org

OUTREACH CENTERS

Bread for the City
1525 Seventh Street, NW
(202) 265-2400
1640 Good Hope Road, SE
(202) 561-8587, www.breadfortheicity.org

Community Council for the Homeless at
Friendship Place
4713 Wisconsin Avenue NW
(202) 364-1419, www.cchfp.org

Bethany Women's Center
1333 N Street, NW
(202) 939-2060, www.nstreetvillage.org

Father McKenna Center
19 Eye Street, NW
(202) 842-1112

Friendship House
619 D Street, SE
(202) 675-9050, www.friendshiphouse.net

Georgetown Ministry Center
1041 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
(202) 338-8301
www.georgetownministrycenter.org

Martha's Table
2114 14th Street, NW
(202) 328-6608, www.marthastable.org

Rachel's Women's Center
1222 11th Street, NW
(202) 682-1005, www.ccdsd.org/howorwc.php

Sasha Bruce Youthwork
741 8th Street, SE
(202) 675-9340, www.sashabruce.org

So Others Might Eat (SOME)
71 "O" Street, NW
(202) 797-8806; www.some.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Academy of Hope GED Center
601 Edgewood Street, NE
(202) 269-6623, www.aohdc.org

Catholic Community Services
924 G Street, NW
(202) 772-4300, www.ccs-dc.org

D.C. Coalition for the Homeless
1234 Massachusetts Ave., NW
(202) 347-8870, www.dccfh.org

Community Family Life Services
305 E Street, NW
(202) 347-0511, www.cflsd.org

Foundry Methodist Church
1500 16th Street, NW
(202) 332-4010, www.foundryumc.org

Gospel Rescue Ministries (Men)
810 5th Street, NW
(202) 842-1731, www.grm.org

Hermano Pedro Day Center
3211 Sacred Heart Way, NW
(202) 332-2874
www.ccs-dc.org/find/services/

JHP, Inc.
425 2nd Street, NW
(202) 544-9126, www.jobshavepriority.org

Samaritan Ministry
1345 U Street, SE
1516 Hamilton Street, NW
(202) 889-7702, www.samaritanministry.org

**SHELTER HOTLINE:
1-800-535-7252**

VENDOR PROFILE: Barron Hall

By Laura Lindskov Jensen
Volunteer



"I'm a vet," is the first thing Barron Hall said when I asked how best to describe him.

Although Barron has many different interests that could describe him, such as being an avid reader, being a veteran is the first thing he mentions. As we talked, I began to understand why: being a veteran is what really changed Barron's life.

Barron is a third-generation Washingtonian, and even though he describes his upbringing as "unique - and not in a good way," his rough childhood did not bring him down. Being forced into the army, and his time there, did.

When Barron came back from Vietnam, he was a changed man.

"I just felt so much guilt from things I'd done in war," Barron explained.

Still Barron managed for some time to hold a job, but slowly the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were too much for him to handle. Instead of seeking help, Barron began self-medicating and soon had left behind his old life, with wife and kids, and was living on the street.

"At first it was humiliating, but living in the street gave me a chance to isolate myself and not worry about anyone needing me," Barron said.

Today Barron lives in a government-subsidized apartment. Before that he had been homeless for 21 years.

***I stopped running
when I started with
Street Sense"***

"I was running from myself," Barron said, looking back on his years on the street. Barron said the running stopped when he began working as a vendor for Street Sense.

"Street Sense is a way for me to get relief from being poor," Barron explained. "It gives me personal income and a way not to sit there panhandling. The paper gives me self-esteem, and a way to keep my head up although I'm poor."

Another turning point for Barron was when, years before finding Street Sense, he found psychiatric help and began taking medicine after visiting the Veterans Administration Hospital.

Today, Barron tries to persuade other veterans to seek help by telling his story through Street Sense.

Barron follows his own advice. When I met him again, he was on his way to the Veterans Administration Hospital and said that he probably will stay there for a week or two since he is not feeling well.

This is why you might not have been able to find Barron Hall by his usual corner at 3rd and D Street, S.W. by the Federal Center subway station. He will be back though, and he will try to write for the paper from the hospital, he said.

Barron's New Year's resolution is "to take one day at a time and help as many people as I can and get close to God, and just try to do it better."

February 1 - 14, 2012 • Volume 9 • Issue 6

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LAST WORD: JUSTICE IS SERVED

By Nikki Conyers
Volunteer

It took jurors less than three hours on Jan. 17 to convict 47-year-old Avery Christopher Bradford of raping two women in Athens, Ga. Bradford was found guilty on all charges: two counts of rape and aggravated assault, three counts of aggravated sodomy and one count of aggravated sexual battery. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison, though his sentence date has not been announced.

The victims were two homeless women living in Clarke County, Ga. who courageously stepped forward to report the crimes to the police. In spite of their situation, the women believed they had a right to justice.

Law enforcement officials said that Bradford raped the women because they were easy targets, given their homelessness.

"These women were beaten and raped because they were homeless and vulnerable, and they were vulnerable because they were addicted to crack cocaine," Assistant District Attorney Jon Forwood said in his address to the jury.

"They are counting on you and the law to find him guilty as charged," he added.

As Bradford's arrest and trial prove, any victim can have an active voice in society. Moreover, being homeless should never stop an individual from speaking out when he or she experiences injustice. Often, those pushed to the lower rungs of society are cruelly

mistreated and expected to keep silent. Thankfully, there are those, like Bradford's victims, who step forward and take their perpetrators to task. Women faced with homelessness can and do speak out when wronged, and justice can be served.

Individuals forced into a state of homelessness, and/or who are experiencing addictions, can be (and tragically, often are) victims of rape and other mistreatment given the dangers of their situation. Indeed, Bradford's victims and all women experiencing homelessness should be treated with dignity and respect. Although the outcome of the trial is still pending, here at Street Sense we are pleased to know that justice will almost certainly be served for the two women in Athens.

At Street Sense, we have a special opportunity for women during Women of Street Sense to share their life stories. WSS meetings are held every third Wednesday of the month to encourage women to voice their perspectives on society. We remind women and individuals that their unique experience in Washington, D.C., is important. These meetings address women's health, safety, well-being and other issues pertinent to living in a state of homelessness. Our next WSS meeting, about the powers of poetry, will be Feb. 15 at 2 p.m.

Nikki Conyers is the WSS Special Events Coordinator.



WOMEN OF STREET SENSE